

## REPORTS FOR 2016

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong. I would like to start by thanking those members of Council and others who have made this evening possible, namely the Hon Secretary, Mr. David McKellar for the preparation of the agenda and meeting papers, the Hon Treasurer, Ms. Connie Carmichael for preparing the Society's accounts and to Ian Hasell & Co, for expediting the audit. I would also like to thank Mr. Robert Nield for liaising with the Hong Kong Club concerning the arrangements for the post-AGM cocktail party, to Ms. Davina Lee for providing website support and to Mr Peter Stuckey for preparing the video display of photographs from the recent Guizhou trip which will be shown later. Finally I would like to thank you all of you for taking the time to attend the meeting this evening and showing your interest and support for your Society. The attendance this evening has exceeded fifty which is very encouraging. I hope as many of you as possible will stay for the cocktail reception after the formal proceedings have concluded.

### OBITUARIES.

I regret to report that during the year the Society lost the following long standing and valued members, namely,

- Dr. Deric Daniel WATERS, BBS, ISO, died 27 January 2016
- Mr. Malcolm Reeve NUNN, MC, died 5 June 2016
- Mr. Jonathan Martin HEATH, died 11 April 2016
- Mr. Ian Francis Cluny MACPHERSON, CBE, OBE, O St J, died 14 April 2016
- Mr. David Lee Ward, died 6 December 2016

Our thoughts also continue to be with Mrs. Valerie Garrett who has been seriously ill since 2009 and to her husband Richard who continues to care for her with such devotion.

### OVERALL SITUATION.

2017 marks the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong in the People's Republic of China. The anniversary, which falls on 1 July 2017, will be marked by numerous cultural events and celebrations, including another major exhibition at the Hong Kong Museum of History showcasing exhibits from the Palace Museum in Beijing. Details of the exhibition will be announced in the newsletter and on the website when known. At this particular time the Society has no specific events planned to coincide with the anniversary, mainly because July and August coincide with our usual summer break. However, if any member has a specific suggestion I am sure the Activities Committee will be pleased to consider it. We are also approaching the Society's Diamond Jubilee which will celebrate the Royal Asiatic Society's sixtieth anniversary in 2019. Many of you will remember the fiftieth anniversary dinner which took place seven years ago, and was graced by the presence of a former governor of Hong Kong, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT, GCMG and his wife Lady Wilson. It was a splendid evening and perhaps we should consider a similar event in 2019 if the Society is still active. I add this note of caution because although the Society has enjoyed another very good year we should not be complacent about the future. Three things which concern me very much are,

- Council succession
- Membership
- Office accommodation

As you are aware the Society is managed by a council comprising fourteen members. The Council is elected by the membership annually at the AGM. Having been president for 5 ½ years it was my wish to step down this year. Unfortunately no one has offered themselves for nomination. For the sake of continuity I have agreed to continue as president until a successor can be found. However I must reiterate that this will be my last term. Similarly the Society urgently needs somebody to take up the role of Secretary, or at least Assistant Secretary to relieve the pressure on our current Hon Secretary. This matter is becoming an urgent priority and I feel members should be prepared to step up and offer their time and energy if the Society is to continue.

The second problem which concerns me is the perennial one of membership. At the end of 2016 the Society had a membership of 560, all categories. Following this year's annual membership renewal exercise the total membership has dropped to 469. While the decline in numbers can be partly attributed to deaths and departures from Hong Kong, many are also the result of members simply failing to renew their memberships or not bothering to arrange a direct debit authorization with their bank. The Society depends very much on its membership subscriptions as its primary source of income and I do ask you all to ensure you pay your subscriptions on time or better still arrange a direct debit.

Another major problem the Society has faced this year concerns office accommodation, including storage. As many of you will know the Society currently rents a small space or work station in a large office at One Island South in Wong Chuk Hang. Additionally we also rent storage space in an adjacent building for the storage of publications and stores. We have rented this space for six years, however our landlord has advised that he intends to sell the premises. For the past six months we have been conducting a search for a new premises. I am pleased to report to you this evening that a new location has now been identified and I anticipate that we shall be moving into the new premises in May 2017. The new office is located inside an industrial building in Quarry Bay but with close access to Taikoo MTR and other transport links. Not only will the new location offer space for the Administrator to work in but it will also afford space for storage which will reduce our expenditure.

#### ACTIVITIES

2016 was another fruitful year for the Society's activities with a total of twenty-six separate events taking place. These were as follows,

- Talks - 14
- Visits - 11
- Misc - 1

Organizing the Society's diverse and varied programme is undertaken by the Activities Committee, chaired by Dr Helen Tinsley. Members of this committee are all volunteers and I would like to thank them for their time and energy on behalf of the Society. Activities are one of the core parts of the RASHK and we need members to support and participate in the organizing of the events. One of the most successful aspects of the activities programme over the past year has been the success of the overseas trips

organized by the Society. The success of these trips is largely due to the efforts of RASHK members Mr Rocky Dang and Mr Peter Stuckey and I would like to thank them for their enthusiasm and commitment in organizing such high quality visits.

Mention was made in my report last year of the Society's website. The website is currently managed by Ms. Davina Lee and over the past year Davina has made numerous revisions and amendments to the site in an effort to upgrade it. One example of the innovation which has taken place is the introduction of video clips, which I believe is a 'first' for the Society and a pointer for the future. I do encourage all members to take the time to browse the website and familiarize themselves with it. We shall continue to publish the bi-monthly newsletter and event notices but please do take time to look at the website and familiarize yourself with it.

#### PUBLICATIONS

Our principal publication for 2016 was Volume 56 of the RAS Journal. I would like to thank the Hon Editor, Dr. Stephen Davies and the Editorial Board for their time and effort in publishing another very interesting volume. In an effort to raise the standing of the RAS Journal, as a recognized international academic publication, a panel of distinguished international scholars have been invited to join the Journal's International Editorial Advisory Committee. The RAS Journal has a dedicated section in the website and this underwent an extensive revision in 2016 which I encourage members to read.

#### SIR LINDSAY AND LADY RIDE MEMORIAL FUND.

The Ride Memorial Fund met four times in 2016 and provided micro grants to local authors in respect of books they were writing. The Fund has continued under the chairmanship of Mr John Strickland, GBS, JP and I would like to thank him and the members of the Trust Fund for their time and interest. Mention was made in my report last year of the award to be called 'The Hong Kong History Book Prize'. A decision on the winner of this prize has yet to be determined.

Ladies and gentlemen that concludes my report and I shall be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Michael B. Broom

President

Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong